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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

THE ELUSIVE PURSUIT OF AN END STATE

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College, the Department of the Navy, or the Department of State.

Signature: 

DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A
Approved for Public Release
Distribution Unlimited

17 May 1999

DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 4

19991122 155

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. Report Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED			
2. Security Classification Authority:			
3. Declassification/Downgrading Schedule:			
4. Distribution/Availability of Report: DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.			
5. Name of Performing Organization: JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT			
6. Office Symbol: C		7. Address: NAVAL WAR COLLEGE 686 CUSHING ROAD NEWPORT, RI 02841-1207	
8. Title (Include Security Classification): The Elusive Pursuit of an End State (U)			
9. Personal Authors: Trevor A. Snellgrove, CIV			
10. Type of Report: FINAL		11. Date of Report: 17 May 1999	
12. Page Count: 18			
13. Supplementary Notation: A paper submitted to the Faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy or the Department of State.			
14. Ten key words that relate to your paper: end state, war termination, negotiation, commander's intent,			
15. Abstract: The concern of military commanders to receive a clearly defined end state from National Command Authorities prior to entering into a military conflict is understandable, but perhaps not realistic. A vision of a military end state which a commander incorporates into his statement of intent is not only appropriate but necessary to properly plan. However, the military end state is not the same as the strategic end state desirable to bring a conflict to a complete and successful end. It may not be possible to specify such an end state well in advance with precision. In fact, the very notion of an end state in some conflicts may be unrealistic. Military planners should not confuse the military end state with a final end state. Even after the termination of hostilities much work will remain to be done and the military still has an important role to play.			
16. Distribution / Availability of Abstract:	Unclassified X	Same As Rpt	DTIC Users

The Elusive Pursuit of an End State

The Department of Defense defines end state as “What the National Command Authorities want the situation to be when operations conclude—both military operations, as well as those where the military is in support of other instruments of national power”¹ The concept of an end state is critical in military planning. First, it allows planning to proceed backwards from the desired end state. This permits planners to focus on the desired results and avoid dead end planning that fails to achieve the desired end state. Second, a clearly expressed end state is essential to the concept of the commander’s intent. The commander’s intent is central to the whole process whereby military planning takes place and mission orders are relayed to subordinates.

While the concept of a clearly defined end state is both proper and necessary to operational military planning, it is my thesis that demanding a clearly defined end state at higher levels of national strategic planning may be unrealistic. If the absence of certainty is used to delay action such insistence may even be harmful. Furthermore, focus on military end states must not be allowed to obscure the valid role that the military may be called upon to play at stages of conflict resolution other than hostilities or war.

The model in which end states exist

Just as a military end state that will lead to the end of hostilities —war termination— must be supported by complementary political and economic conditions, it may be impossible to achieve the desired political or economic end states without appropriate

¹“War Termination Criteria and JOPES: A Dangerous Omission in U.S. Crisis Action Planning,” 25 March 1994, *Joint Electronic Library CD-ROM*, Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 1998.

military conditions. The seeds of failure under such circumstances take root when the agencies of government that traditionally have the lead in each phase of a peace to war to peace cycle fail to properly coordinate their actions and planning.

Americans often view World War II as the model for how a war should be concluded. There was a clear victory and those who were seen to be the aggressors were effectively removed from future influence. World War II, however, is not the best model upon which to base our expectations of conflict. Despite worldwide scope and the terrible devastation that World War II produced, the Allied strategy of seeking unconditional surrender of Japan and Germany may be too simple a model. Furthermore, the Cold War which followed was based on the terrible simplicity of a strategy of mutual assured destruction. It is no wonder that Americans are uncomfortable with complicated conflicts that do not have clear, neat outcomes. Most armed conflicts are not simple, however. They are not fought to the point of elimination of one opponent or the other, but end in some form of negotiated settlement. Arguably, most of America's conflicts in the foreseeable future are likely to end in some form of negotiated settlement. This is not to say that we will not face opponents who view the conflict as one in which their interests are unlimited and who may pursue the fight in an unlimited manner. The likelihood of limited war with a negotiated (even if done under heavy coercion) end is more a result of the United States' current status as the sole superpower, and an evolving U.S. and international intolerance for the type of devastation wrought by more unlimited warfare.

If most of America's future armed conflicts involve negotiated as opposed to imposed settlements, then it is important to understand how the end state of hostilities relates to such

settlements.

In the complex system of interactions between two nations in conflict, there are many possible routes from a peaceful relationship through a period of conflict and back to peace. Not all paths are equal and the costs and final outcomes for the participants are likely to vary greatly depending on the paths taken. If at some point, the conflict turns to war, the path is likely to be very costly for one or both parties.

Given the risk and costs involved, there is an understandable wish to be able to plan the path through a conflict from beginning to end. Plans are valuable in that they give one a well thought out starting point and help identify blind alleys and pitfalls. Failure to plan seriously in the face of possible war is almost criminal and may encourage aggression by the act of omission. Plans are unlikely, however, to provide an accurate roadmap of the path that will be followed from beginning to end of any journey through a conflict, especially one that includes war. A good plan must be flexible and will need to be constantly updated as events require. Even the final destination, the end state, may change. Such a change may represent a failure to achieve one's optimal objective, but may – in other circumstances – may allow one to pursue a more valuable objective that seemed out of reach or too expensive in earlier planning.

A conflict termination research team at the Air Command and Staff College developed a conflict resolution framework based on an earlier work by Richard Barringer.² The framework model depicts a process with seven possible phases. These include peace,

²Sam Allotey and others, "Planning and Execution of Conflict Termination," (Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Air University, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, AL: 1995), 9-10.

dispute, pre-hostilities, hostilities, post-hostilities, settlement and ideally a better state of peace. One of the distinctions among the phases is the degree to which the various sources of national power are likely to dominate. In peace, economics are likely to dominate a relationship, with politics being second and military power of least consequence between nations who have no outstanding conflicts. As matters move toward dispute and then pre-hostilities phases, political power assumes the dominant role, with the role of economics diminishing and the role of military power increasing. If matters cross into open hostilities, military power becomes dominant, with political power second and economics a more distant third. As hostilities end and the relations go through a post-hostilities and then settlement phase attempting to once again reach a stage of peace, the relative importance of each of the sources of power once again changes in ways similar to the lead up to hostilities. This model offers a structure from which to view the full conflict cycle and to think about the end states of each phase.

The types of national power which can be brought to bear on situations in an attempt to influence their outcome are military, political, economic and informational. Informational power encompasses the realm of ideas, ranging from religion to popular culture and fashion, but also includes the ability to disseminate those ideas and viewpoints or facts as represented by the various forms of media. The conflict resolution framework model ignores "informational" sources of power, but that does not destroy its usefulness in most cases. Even though the type of informational power based on culture, religion or ideology might be the most powerful type of power to influence national behaviors in the long run, it is less likely to be significant over the time periods which are normally of concern. True influence

from these types of informational power are likely to be measured in years or generations.

Economic power operates on a shorter time span than informational, but may also have great influence if allowed to operate over a long period. Political power is somewhat more direct, and military power has the potential for the most direct influence and the shortest time factor to be effective. The difference in the time required for each type of power to achieve results can make the coordination of the different types of power difficult. Yet, it is essential that an effort be made to coordinate the various sources of national power and to achieve the synergy that can be achieved by doing so.

How the military views end states

A review of the documents present in the June 1998 edition of the *Joint Electronic Library CD-ROM* demonstrates an awareness and concern for the importance of designating appropriate end states in military planning. Furthermore, there is great emphasis on the close connection between those end states and a successful war termination that supports national interests and objectives. Discussions of war termination almost always refer to the importance of clear end states. The Joint Electronic Library, developed and distributed by the Joint Staff, contains the most important, unclassified publications of the U.S. military outlining current Joint U.S. military doctrine for the planning of military actions, both in conventional war and in military operations other than war. It also contains important service publications that complement the joint publications, along with a sampling of unofficial, but clearly well regarded articles and unpublished papers. An electronic search of the 309 documents in the library revealed that the phrase "end state" appears in 75

documents and the phrase "war termination" appears in 20. Furthermore, there is frequent reference to Clausewitz and his argument that it is wise to plan for the termination of a war before entering it.

In spite of an apparent consensus on the importance of these topics, there is also an obvious sense of unease with what some see as the lack of clear doctrinal guidance on how these subjects should be formally addressed by a military commander during the planning process. In an essay deemed important enough to be included in the CD-ROM version of the Joint Electronic Library published by the Joint Chiefs, the fact that a "structure" for war termination planning is not included in the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System is cited as a serious omission.³ The paper containing the conflict resolution framework previously mentioned gives a similar concern as one of the reasons for their work and includes a "Draft Annex T" to Joint Publication 5-03.1 which they hoped might alleviate this problem.⁴ As of the most current electronic version, however, the 1993 edition of Joint Pub 5-03.1 remains unchanged.

The root of this concern seems to lie with the perception that the military commander must receive a "clear" description of the desired end state from the National Command Authority (NCA) before military action is initiated. Part of the concern stems from a genuine frustration with a lack of clear guidance from above. However, part of the concern also arises from a lack of precision over the use of the term "end state."

³ John S. Haven, Kevin A. Shwedo, and Robert R. Soucy, II, "War Termination Criteria and JOPES: A Dangerous Omission in U.S. Crisis Action Planning," 25 March 1994, *Joint Electronic Library CD-ROM*, Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 1998.

⁴ Allotey and others, 8, 106.

The official definition does not make a clear distinction between a military end state relevant to a military commander and overall strategic end state relevant to the NCA. While the former should by definition support the latter, they are not necessarily identical. Indeed, the "Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia" recognizes this when it states that *"There may be a preliminary end state described by a set of military conditions when military force is no longer the principal means to the strategic aim. There may also be a broader end state that typically involves returning to a state of peace and stability and may include a variety of diplomatic, economic, informational, and military conditions."*⁵

The U.S. Army does an even better job of clarifying the distinction between a military end state and the larger strategic end state when it states in FM 100-5, "Military force is only one component of national security strategy. ... While military commanders focus on military victory, they must be aware of the broader concerns of strategy. ... Military forces must be prepared to support strategic objectives after the termination of hostilities. In both war and operations other than war, military and specifically Army units must integrate their efforts to support the overall policy scheme."⁶

The Gulf Conflict - a series of end states

The common wisdom today is that the United States missed an opportunity to resolve the problem of Iraq after the rapid victory of coalition land forces at the end of the Gulf War. This conclusion must be challenged by asking just what could or might have been done differently. The end state could easily have been far less satisfactory for U.S. national

⁵ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia," 16 July 1997, 274, *Joint Electronic Library CD-ROM*, Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 1998.

⁶ Headquarters Department of the Army, *FM 100-5 Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: June 1993), 1-4.

interests. Such an outcome does not refer to the unlikely event of a coalition military defeat or even to much larger coalition losses to Iraqi forces. What might easily have happened was that a negotiated ceasefire could have been accepted by Sadaam allowing Iraqi forces to withdraw before the land war, or even the air war, began. It is easy to forget that the Soviet Union (it was still a bipolar world with a powerful, if ailing, Soviet Union at that time) was making an all out effort to reach a settlement in which Iraqi forces withdrew from Kuwait and a land war was avoided. Soviet reasons for these actions are unimportant here. The fact is that President Bush in a speech to a joint session of Congress on September 11, 1990, had placed significant value on the ability to work with the Soviets on the matter of Iraq as the basis for moving "toward a historic period of cooperation" that would ultimately lead to "a new world order."⁷ If the Soviets had been more successful in convincing Saddam of his own best interests, Iraq might have decided to withdraw while attempting to negotiate a more lenient interpretation of relevant U.N. Security Council Resolutions. The United States probably would have found it impossible to hold together the coalition in those circumstances and would have had to weigh the desire to reduce Saddam's threat to the region against the value of cooperation with the Soviet Union and other nations. When Saddam's arrogance, stupidity, or fear of appearing weak led him to continued defiance, the United States and its coalition partners not only destroyed a significant part of Iraq's military power, but also imposed ceasefire conditions under UNSCR 687 that were unique in their imposition of international terms on the internal activities of a sovereign country. As a direct result, the issue of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction were addressed for almost eight years in

⁷ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1998), 370.

ways that they probably would not have been, had Saddam taken a negotiated settlement earlier.

If one attempts to analyze the crisis with Iraq in terms of the framework outlined by Allotey, et al, it is clear that there have been several end states in the conflict to date, beginning with an unsatisfactory military/diplomatic one in the dispute phase which failed to anticipate or deter Iraq's decision to invade Kuwait. The assembly of an international coalition in agreement on conditions that Iraq had to meet to avoid hostilities and which was willing and able to confront Iraq militarily, defined the end state of the pre-hostilities phase. The military end state which led directly to the ceasefire was by the situation that led to the collapse of Iraqi resistance at the end of 100 hours of land war. The passage of UNSCR 687 and its "acceptance" by Iraq was arguably the end state of the immediate post hostilities phase, and we remain in the phase of settlement and dispute which followed. A final, satisfactory end state, which would involve a situation in which the conflict was resolved, has definitely not been reached. Ideally, the end state of this phase, the true desired, national strategic end state, would be Iraq's full compliance with the conditions of UNSCR 687, at which time Iraq could re-enter the community of nations with normal relations. Unless and until that occurs, however, the status quo continues and the danger exists that widespread hostilities will resume.

The fact that the conflict with Iraq continues to this day has led many people to point fingers at the manner in which the war itself ended. A common criticism is that coalition forces should have continued to Baghdad and made sure that Saddam was replaced. This, of course, completely ignores several facts. Foremost, the overthrow of Saddam was never part

of declared U.S. objectives in the Gulf War. In spite of rhetorical statements by President Bush, Secretary Baker and others who clearly indicated that Saddam was viewed as a crucial part of the problem with Iraq,⁸ his removal was never part of the mission given to the US military. There were several reasons for this. It would not have been acceptable to many of our coalition partners. There was great uncertainty over whether or not Saddam would be replaced by someone better. It also would have been far from easy to accomplish, probably requiring an invasion of Baghdad itself with all that that might have entailed. There was also what turned out to be a false assumption that once Saddam was soundly defeated, the Iraqi military or people would overthrow him themselves. In fact there were uprisings after the war ended, but Saddam managed to put them down and now appears to have established his control as firmly as ever. It is around the failure of this last assumption, and its relationship to the military end state following hostilities that we should look more closely.

While it is true that the overthrow of Saddam was never a formal tasking to the military, the assumption that he would fall was widely accepted. Indeed, the destruction of the Republican Guard units, while clearly part of a goal to reduce Iraq's power to threaten her neighbors, was also expected to undermine Saddam's hold on power. It was the failure to do as much damage to the Republican Guard units as was possible and originally planned, that some blamed for the fact that Saddam was able to retain his hold on power following the war. In fact, it is very unclear whether another day of destruction of Republican Guard units, or even the success of the original encirclement plan would have prevented Saddam from

⁸ Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990 - 1991*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 412,

maintaining his hold on power. Saddam's military forces presented a less formidable resistance to coalition attackers than anticipated for many reasons. Among them was the fact that Saddam deliberately held back his Republican Guard, not just as part of a strategic mobile reserve, but also to preserve them as the bulwark of his own political survival. Many Iraqi military units were not in the Kuwaiti theater at all, but were reserved for political reasons.⁹ Nor was Saddam's survival entirely dependent on the Republican Guard. He had a vicious internal security service that was separate from the military. In short, it is simply unknown whether additional military destruction during the final hours/days of the land war would have made a significant difference in Saddam's survival.

If the long term impact of the military end state at the time of the declared ceasefire is unclear, the circumstances immediately following seem less defensible. The problem appears to be that insufficient planning had been done by either the military or other agencies to deal with the immediate aftermath of the war. It is understandable that everyone was concentrating on the war itself. It was not expected to be as quick or "easy" as it was. Perhaps everyone thought there would be time to plan. Whatever the reasons, when the ceasefire was called, the preparations were inadequate. When military to military meetings were held in a tent at Safwan, the crisis was at a delicate point in the transition from hostilities to post-hostilities, but there was simply no planning. Much has been made of General Schwarzkopf's granting the Iraqis the right to use helicopters. Of far greater impact, it seems was his assurance to the Iraqis that coalition forces would be leaving Iraqi territory

⁹ Ibid., 435.

as quickly as possible.¹⁰ What political leverage existed because of the military end state that had been achieved was squandered by such statements. It seems clear that once the military end state leading to termination of the war had been reached, General Schwartzkopf and others were anxious to secure the return of prisoners and go home. Paul Wolfowitz of the Pentagon has been quoted as saying, "The military's attitude was we have won. Let's cut this cleanly and not let the civilians load us with a lot of missions. Safwan was too hasty and too dignified."¹¹ The danger of focusing on a single end state is clear in retrospect. The period after hostilities still contained a number of roles for the military to play, most in cooperation with other agencies or with the international community.

It was not only the military that was poorly prepared for events of this period. Obviously, no instructions for General Schwartzkopf in the event of ceasefire discussions had been prepared or coordinated in advance, and the military simply underestimated the importance of the issues that were dealt with in an almost ad hoc manner. Beyond, the talks at Safwan, once an uprising against Saddam did begin, there was still no consensus in U.S. policy circles on how the U.S. should react, so the United States did nothing. When refugees began to flow within Iraq, the United States and the international community were ill-prepared initially. When a proposal was put forward within the U.S. Government by Ambassador Pickering to establish a demilitarized zone in southern Iraq, it did not survive the opposition of the military and the indecision elsewhere, including at the State Department

¹⁰ Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War*, (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 447.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 448

over the question of helping the Shiites that were rising against Saddam.¹²

Still later, when the settlement phase of the conflict had been entered following the adoption of UNSCR 687, there was initial reluctance on the part of the military to see itself with a continued role to play. As the resolution was being drafted, an interagency task force was established within the Political-Military Affairs Bureau of the Department of State to coordinate U.S. support to the UN Special Commission and to the International Atomic Energy Agency in their inspection role. During the initial weeks of planning, there was a constant problem in getting commitments of support from the Defense Department for such things as transportation assistance and U-2 surveillance.¹³

Conclusions about end states

The concern for a clear definition of an end state to a conflict is a valid one, but one that must be tempered in several ways.

First, national policy encompasses military policy and military end states should support desired national strategic end states. The setting of a military end state which would lead to the termination of hostilities at least cost to the United States is the proper concern of a military commander and likely to be the focus of attention during the actual hostilities phase of a conflict. However, war termination will not typically end a conflict and return the larger

¹² Ibid., 450 - 451.

¹³ When this task force was formed in March 1991, the author, a State Foreign Service Officer, was working in OES/NEP which at the time had the lead role in policy issues surrounding relations between the U.S. Government and the IAEA. As a result the author was assigned to be one of the initial staff members of the task force and spent several hours each day for over six months attending task force meetings and working on issues surrounding the inspections. On several occasions over the first weeks after the passage of UNSCR 687, either UNSCOM or the IAEA turned to the US Government for assistance and the task force often turned to the Department of Defense. The military officers assigned to the task force were typically enthusiastic about seeking support from their headquarters when they left a meeting only to return a day or so later with news that

international situation to one of peace between the combatants. The achievement of military ends is not synonymous with the achievement of national strategic ends, but only a part of that goal. The larger ends in support of national interests are likely to be achieved only when the relationship between the United States and an opponent has resumed a degree of "normalcy" in which the interests of the United States are preserved. Going from hostilities to such a state will almost certainly require passing through steps in the relationship which are neither "war" nor "peace" in the conventional sense of the words. During such times, the military must continue to play an important role, albeit one different from that taken during actual war. Much attention is given by the U.S. military today to the range of activities covered by the term "Military Operations Other Than War" – MOOTW. Such phases in the transition from war to peace will also have desired end states, although they are likely to involve other facets of national power in addition to military and, in fact, military actions may be largely supporting. In considering the military end state during wartime, a commander must look ahead to the post-hostilities phase of events and ensure that the end state at the time of war termination supports not only military, but other instruments of national power in the transition to follow on phases of a conflict.

Second, a desirable end state may change over time as the nature of a conflict becomes clearer and as the costs of various options become clearer. While consistency can be a valuable thing, it should not be insisted upon even when circumstances change radically. Since military planning is most often regressive, that is it works backwards from a desired end

the request was being passed up the channels but being resisted. Eventually, the issue of support was resolved, but not before becoming an item of interagency debate that had to be settled at the highest levels.

state, clearly a change in that desired end state may require significant changes of plans. It may, in fact, be impossible to achieve the original end state within the bounds of time, space and force that exist. If so, the military commander has an obligation to interact with higher level policymakers so that objectives, desired end states, and/or the factors of time, space and force may be adjusted to bring military planning into harmony with the strategic end state. The requirement for the commander under such circumstances is to review the consistency of his planning against not only his own military end state, which is embodied in his statement of intent to those under his command, but also in terms of their likely impact on political and economic outcomes. The commander's intent must be continually checked for consistency with the most recent expression of national objectives and desired strategic end state, even if that expression is not as clear as might be hoped.

Third, the idea of an "end state" is a useful abstraction for planning purposes. Indeed, since the desired military end state to a war almost certainly involves the defeat of an opponent and a valid, secure ceasefire, the idea of a military end state has significant meaning. However, in the larger national strategic sense, the term "end state" is less valid. An end state conjures up images of a chemical reaction that goes through a number of reaction phases before settling to a stable end state. Social systems, no matter what level, are less likely to behave in this manner. This seems particularly true at the international level, where national sovereignty and the absence of a higher authority make long term stability difficult, and where decisions on end states may involve many different nations. Clashes of national objectives and disputes, may be solved without resort to violence, but the possibility of armed conflict always remains. If hostilities do occur, they may be resolved in a manner that creates a

stability superior to that which existed before the conflict. Just as likely, however, is a situation in which the conflict has been suppressed but not fully resolved. A true resolution of conflicts should always be the goal, but often it is simply not possible. Sometimes the best that can be achieved is to buy time while the world makes slow progress toward the type of "new world order" that President Bush envisioned. The point is that military commanders can and should seek clearly defined missions and national strategic end state guidance from the National Command Authority. However, they should not be surprised if it is sometimes not as clear as desired, and they should be prepared to work with what is available. If one waits until the path ahead is always crystal clear, no journey will be undertaken and perfection can easily become the enemy of the good.

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